

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 25-30 are pending herein. Claims 16-24 have been cancelled hereby. Specifically, claims 16, 20 and 21 have been cancelled in favor of new claim 25, claim 19 has been cancelled in favor of new claim 26, claim 23 has been cancelled in favor of new claim 27, claim 24 has been cancelled in favor of new claim 28, and claims 17-18 have been cancelled in favor of new claims 29-30, respectively. Applicant respectfully submits that no new matter has been added.

This Amendment is proper under Rule 116 because it does not raise any new issues and places the application in condition for allowance. Thus, entry of this Amendment is respectfully requested.

1. Applicant appreciates the PTO indicating that claims 21-24 would be allowed if rewritten in independent form. Applicant respectfully submits that new independent claim 25 includes the subject matter of claims 16, 20 and 21 rewritten in independent form. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that all claims pending herein are in condition for allowance and respectfully requests that a Notice of Allowance be issued for this application in due course.
2. The §103(a) rejection of claims 16-18 over Thackeray is noted, but deemed moot in view of the cancellation of those claims. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the above rejection be reconsidered and withdrawn.
3. The §103(a) rejection of claims 16-19 over Manev is noted, but deemed moot in view of the cancellation of those claims. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the above rejection be reconsidered and withdrawn.
4. The §103(a) rejection of claims 16-18 over EP '235 is noted, but deemed moot in view of the cancellation of those claims. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the above rejection be reconsidered and withdrawn.

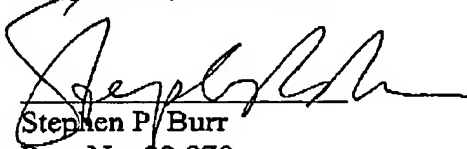
5. The §103(a) rejection of claims 16-18 and 20 over Ogihara '410 is noted, but deemed moot in view of the cancellation of those claims. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the above rejection be reconsidered and withdrawn.

If the Examiner believes that contact with Applicant's attorney would be advantageous toward the disposition of this case, the Examiner is herein requested to call Applicant's attorney at the phone number noted below.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees associated with this communication or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-1446.

Respectfully submitted,

February 5, 2004
Date


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